POST-ELECTION REVIEW

A Guide to Briefing Councillors on the Organization and Processes of Municipal Government in Prince Edward Island

A co-operative undertaking of:

Federation of Prince Edward Island Municipalities

Association of Municipal Administrators, Prince Edward Island

Prince Edward Island Department of Community and Cultural Affairs

and

Maritime Municipal Training and Development Board

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PREFACE

The ancestry of this publication dates back to 1984 when a special working committee was established to develop a useful and practical guide for conducting orientation sessions for those councillors who would be newly elected in Nova Scotia's general municipal elections of 1985. The eventual product of the Committee's labour was the publication, *A Guide to Familiarizing Councillors on the Organization and Processes of Municipal Governmen*t. This document was very well received by both elected and appointed officials and was revised vis-a-vis a second edition in 1988.

This latest resource, *Post-election Review: A Guide to Briefing Councillors on the Organization and Processes of Municipal Government in Prince Edward Island,* draws upon some of the material contained in the earlier Nova Scotia publication. Additional material has also been prepared specifically to address the needs of Prince Edward Island municipalities.

Post-election Review was prepared under the coordination of Rosemary MacDonald, a graduate student in public administration employed with the Maritime Municipal Training and Development Board. A committee composed of Prince Edward Island representatives from the Federation of Prince Edward Island Municipalities, the Association of Municipal Administrators, and the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs reviewed each draft of the document and provided very helpful advice and assistance. Special thanks are extended to committee members Lisa Doyle, George Likely, Kingsley Lewis, Merrill Scott, John MacLean, Richard Montigny and Joe Coady. Appreciation is also extended to Don Smeltzer, Ken Simpson and Martin Corbett for their advice, counsel and support throughout the development work, and to Susan LeBlanc, Shelley Pitts, and Debbie Kampen for their work in preparing the content for publication.

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of post-election briefing sessions for municipal elected officials cannot be overemphasized. When properly organized, they provide an opportunity for newly elected councillors, and for persons who have been on council for some time, to ask questions and to receive information about the organization and processes of municipal government. The sessions also provide a unique opportunity for senior staff of the municipality to explain the operations of their department or agency and to acquaint councillors with important issues or concerns which may be outstanding. The successful "coming together" of the elected and appointed officials, through the briefing process, can lay the foundation for an ongoing attitude of frank discussion, trust, and teamwork between the policy-making and administrative arms of government. These attitudes are essential for good government and, when present, help make the challenges and frustrations of work at the municipal level a more enjoyable experience for all.

Post-election Review: A Guide to Briefing Councillors on the Organization and Processes of Municipal Government in Prince Edward Island is designed to assist those Prince Edward Island municipalities already considering a post-election briefing session, while encouraging those municipalities which had not previously contemplated its benefits to give it a try. *Post-election Review* suggests a number of topic areas for discussion and a direction which briefing sessions may take. It is intended by its authors to serve as a reference and to provide municipal decision-makers with a basic framework around which post-election briefing sessions may be organized.

ORGANIZING THE POST-ELECTION BRIEFING SESSION(S)

Step One Discuss the idea of holding a post-election briefing session(s) with all councillors and senior staff members. Generally, a full-day session should be held as soon after the municipal elections as possible. In addition, it might also be desirable to hold further briefing sessions throughout each term of office.

Step Two Determine the number and length of the session(s) necessary.

Step Three Establish a date and time for the session(s).

Step Four Arrange for appropriate meeting space. Participants should be made to feel at ease in a comfortable and informal environment. Plan for an informal lunch (or other function) during the session(s).

Step Five Prepare an agenda or list of matters to be covered. You may want to include some or all of the topics outlined in this publication. Refer to the Table of Contents for a list of "Topics for Discussion".

Step Six Consider and obtain the proper tools (i.e. copies of legislation and financial data) necessary for effectively presenting the information. In addition to senior staff members, you may wish to invite other resource persons, including committee chairpersons, former elected officials, your solicitor, auditor, provincial officials, or other guest speakers.

Step Seven Prepare a package of information to be handed out to the councillors. You may wish to include the following:

- Municipalities Act
- bylaws of the municipality
- minutes of previous meetings of council and any committees to which councillors are appointed
- a copy of the personnel policies and procedures handbook
- *A Guide to Local Government in Prince Edward Island* (third edition)
- previous year's budget and audited statements
- a copy of your Municipal Information Manual, if applicable
- information on municipal associations, training/educational organizations, government departments and other organizations
- list of senior staff members
- list of other individuals/organizations/agencies within your municipality with whom you have a working relationship
- a copy of the official plan of the municipality

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

Roles, Responsibilities and Relationships

A clear understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of elected and appointed officials is essential to the well-ordered operation of every municipal unit, as is an understanding of appropriate reporting relationships. An overview of roles, responsibilities and relationships should be included in any post-election briefing session. It is important to note, however, that the common interpretation of these may differ somewhat from the actual roles, responsibilities and relationships characteristic of smaller communities. An organizational chart which indicates the reporting relationships in your municipal unit and a list outlining the corresponding roles and responsibilities of council and staff will prove valuable tools for review. Examples of two organization charts are provided on pages 7 and 8 for your review.

Questions you may want to address concerning roles, responsibilities and relationships in your municipality include:

- Why is it important to define roles and responsibilities clearly?
- What are the individual roles and responsibilities of council and staff?
- What is the oath of office and what obligations does it entail?
- What does your municipality's organizational chart mean?
- What are the implications of not following the proper reporting procedures?
- Are current reporting relationships satisfactory?
- Who is the spokesperson for your municipality?

Roles and Responsibilities of Council

These include:

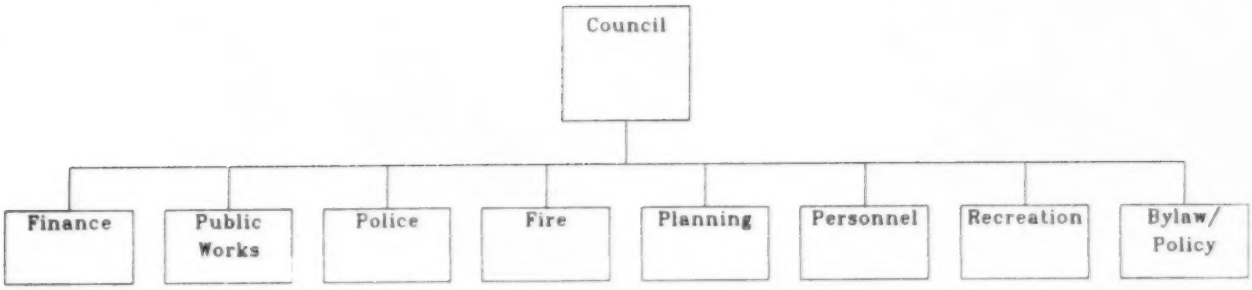
- establishing the direction of the municipality
- providing leadership
- determining priorities
- approving policies
- providing residents with an appropriate mix of services
- approving budget allocations
- setting tax rates
- approving the operating structure for the municipality
- staffing the organization
- allocating necessary resources
- adopting bylaws, resolutions, and policies
- maintaining good public relations
- evaluating senior management
- providing competitive employee compensation and benefits

Roles and Responsibilities of Senior Staff

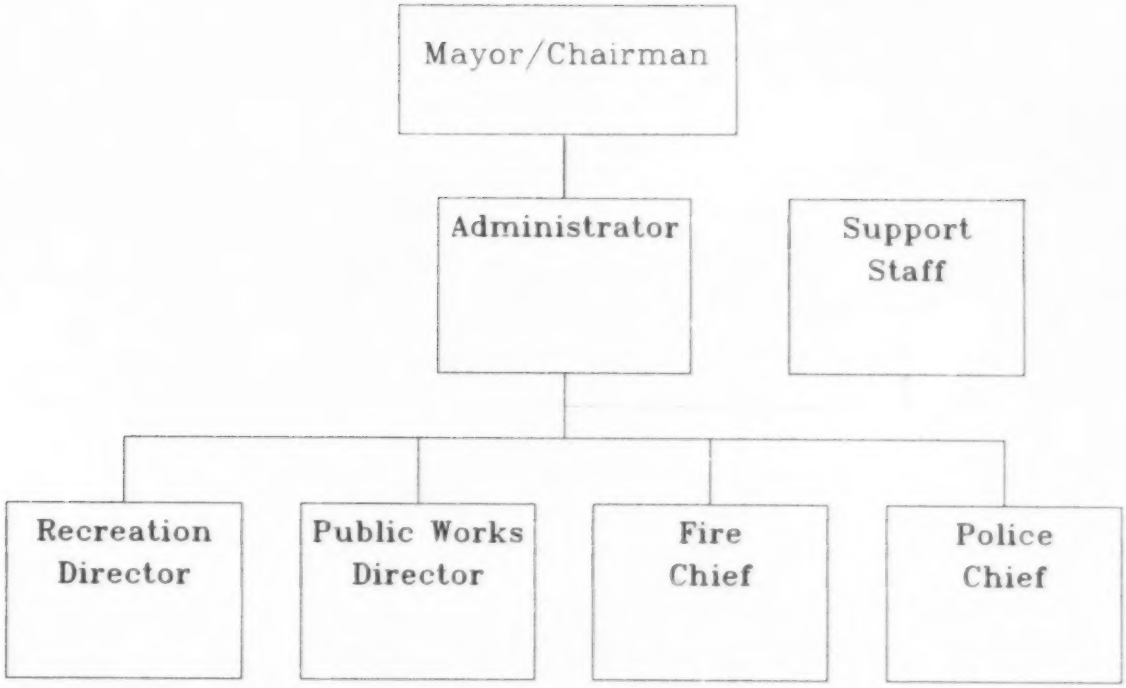
These include:

- understanding and appreciating the democratic system
- understanding and appreciating the management function
- acting as an information resource to council, staff and the general public
- implementing and administering approved policies of council
- informing council and its boards and committees of possible policy options, alternatives, and implications
- managing the organization; undertaking day-to-day tasks
- providing leadership in short- and long-range planning
- managing personnel
- managing fiscal resources
- communicating effectively
- preparing draft policies, programs, and budgets
- responding to public enquiries; advising on policies
- staying current; keeping up to date on new developments
- evaluating policies, programs, and staff
- providing appropriate leadership to staff; praising, correcting, and rewarding
- encouraging staff development within the municipal corporation

Organization Chart - Council and Committees



Organization Chart - Municipal Staff



Committees

Committees are an integral part of municipal government but may vary in their size, number, and responsibilities. When providing information about committees, consider:

- What committees are in place within your municipality?
- What is the purpose of each committee within your municipality?
- What are each committee's terms of reference?
- What is the difference between a standing committee and a special committee?
- What is a committee of the whole?
- What committee meetings, if any, are open to the public?
- Why is it important for councillors to be actively involved in committee work?
- How are committee appointments made within your municipality?
- When are committees formed?
- How often do committees meet?
- How are committees interrelated, e.g. Finance and all other committees?

Following is a listing of several of the main committees found in a municipality and a brief explanation of their responsibilities. It should be noted that the actual responsibilities assigned to a particular committee will vary among municipal units and is dependent upon the terms of reference which are assigned to the committee by council.

Finance Committee

- prepares and submits to council the annual estimates/budgets;
- regulates all matters in connection with the receipt and payment of money, i.e. allocation of funds;
- maintains current and accurate financial statements for operating expenses; and
- considers and reports on all matters relating to, for example, finance, bonds, and loans.

Recreation Committee

- develops recreational policies aimed at providing recreational and parks programs designed to meet the needs and interests of the municipality; and
- submits annual estimates to the Finance Committee for recreational expenditures.

Bylaw/Policy Committee

- prepares and introduces into council proposed policies and bylaws pertaining to matters which may have been referred to it by council or individual committees of council or may have originated with the Bylaw/Policy Committee itself; and
- conducts an annual review of existing policies and bylaws and recommends desirable amendments to the same.

Public Works Committee

- develops a public works program to meet the community requirements in areas such as maintenance of streets, garbage disposal, sanitary and storm sewer system, sidewalks, etc.; and
- submits annual estimates to the Finance Committee for expenditures falling within its jurisdiction.

Meetings

The following are suggested as some of the questions newly elected municipal officials may want to ask about meetings:

- Why are meetings held?
- What meetings are necessary to attend?
- When and where are meetings normally held?
- Are meetings and minutes open to the public and/or media?
- What information will be distributed prior to a meeting?
- How long do meetings normally last?
- Is there payment for attendance at meetings?
- How are agendas put together?
- Do councillors have to be familiar with Parliamentary Procedures or Rules of Order?
- What are the duties of the chairman?
- What are the duties of staff at meetings?

Budgets

Concerning budgets, you may wish to consider the following questions:

- When does the budgeting process take place?
- Who is in charge of the budgeting process?
- What is the involvement of:
  - department heads?
  - administrator?
  - councillors?
  - the public?
- When and how are the committees of council involved?
- When is the Finance Committee involved?
- At what stage does council, as a body, deal with the budget?
- What budgeting techniques are used?
- What are the municipality's sources of revenue?
- What are the primary considerations in preparing the budget?
- How do capital budgets, operating budgets and utility budgets differ?
- Are there any specific policies in place respecting the budget?
- How does provincial legislation affect budget preparation?
- Who prepares the budget?
- What is the format for the budget?
- How detailed is the budget?
- What kind of budget report is prepared?
- How does assessment fit into the budgeting picture?
- How do provincial and federal grants fit into the budgeting process?

- How are the tax rates calculated? How do they relate to previous years?
- Why are there two tax rates (non-commercial and commercial)?
- What is the approval process?
- At what stage does the budget become a public document?

It might be useful to outline, in point form, the steps which are followed in your muncipality with respect to the budgeting process.

Problems

The following represent some problems that a councillor may encounter in performance of his or her elected functions or as a result of enquiries or complaints from the public.

- flooded basements
- complaints regarding taxes and assessment
- problems with stray animals
- odours from farm operations
- problems with sewerage
- building permit approvals
- insufficient parking
- excessive noise
- dealing with the media
- lobby groups
- request for a councillor's influence in obtaining a job

It is suggested that a discussion regarding the appropriate process for dealing with and/or resolving such issues be included in the briefing session. Consider the following questions when addressing specific issues.

- Is this an administrative or policy matter?
- Should the problem be referred to the administrator, council or a committee chairperson?
- Does the muncipality have the legal authority to concern itself with this problem?

Public Relations

With regard to public relations, you may wish to consider the following questions:

- What is public relations?
- Why is good public relations important?
- Who acts as spokesperson for your council?
- What role does the administration play in public relations?
- What is the normal relationship of your council/administration with the media?
- What is your council's policy respecting the release of information?

Relevant Legislation

A municipality receives its authority from the Province through Provincial Statutes and is empowered to create its own bylaws by virtue of the Municipalities Act. You may wish to approach this duality by providing newly elected officials with some information on Provincial Statutes and your own municipal bylaws. It might be helpful to have your municipal solicitor conduct this portion of the session.

Provincial

A listing of the principal Acts of the Provincial Legislature impacting on municipalities follows. This listing is intended to cover those public statutes that make specific or general provisions for municipalities as a whole.

- Environmental Protection Act
- Municipalities Act
- Planning Act
- Water and Sewerage Act

Other provincial statutes impacting on municipalities include:

- Area Industrial Commissions Act
- Dog Act
- Emergency Measures Act
- Financial Administration Act
- Highway Traffic Act
- Provincial Building Code Act
- Provincial Court Act

- Real Property Assessment Act
- Real Property Tax Act
- Roads Act
- Store Hours Act

Municipal

You are encouraged to identify the key bylaws which govern the affairs of your municipality.

INFORMATION SOURCES

Information may be obtained from the following sources:

- Department of Community and Cultural Affairs (C&CA)
- Federation of Prince Edward Island Municipalities (FPEIM)
- Association of Municipal Administrators, Prince Edward Island (AMA,PEI)
- Municipal Administration Program (MAP), Henson College of Public Affairs and Continuing Education, Dalhousie University
- Maritime Municipal Training and Development Board (MMTDB)
- Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)
- Your local library

RESOURCE MATERIAL

Finance

Annual budget(s)
Previous year's audited financial statements
Provincial financial assistance programs
Municipal Accounting and Reporting Manual (C&CA)
Cash Management Handbook for Local Government (MMTDB)
Department of Community and Cultural Affairs' Annual Report
Municipal Statistics
Municipal Standard Code of Accounts (C&CA)
Assessment Roles

Legislative

Up-to-date statutes of the Province of Prince Edward Island and bills of the Legislature
All local bylaws
Minutes of council and committees of your municipal unit
Bourinot's Rules of Order
Various briefs, reports and minutes of the Federation of Prince Edward Island Municipalities
Municipal Elections Handbook (C&CA)
A Guide to Local Government in Prince Edward Island (third edition)
Model Bylaws for Prince Edward Island Municipalities (C&CA & FPEIM)

Municipal Periodicals

Intergovernmental Committee on Urban and Regional Research (ICURR)
The Boardroom Files, a journal for municipal decision-makers (MMTDB)
Municipal World
News Digest (International Institute of Municipal Clerks - IIMC)
Municipal Forum (FPEIM)
Civic Public Works

Training and Development

Federation of Prince Edward Island Municipalities: conferences, seminars and workshops
Association of Municipal Administrators, Prince Edward Island: conferences, seminars and workshops
Brochures on Municipal Seminar Series sponsored by MMTDB
Local Government: The Team in Action (MMTDB video)
Training and Development for Local Government (MMTDB)
Municipal Personnel Policy and Procedure Resource Manual (MMTDB)
Municipal Administration Program courses (Henson College)
It's Your Choice! A Model for Decision-Making in Local Government (MMTDB publication - pending)

A FINAL NOTE

We hope that *Post-election Review* will be helpful to you. Please feel free to forward any comments and suggestions you may have concerning this publication to one or all of the sponsoring organizations:

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